

Don't Worry About Your WAC Oversea; She's Healthier And Happier Than When at Home, Says Medical Officer

Major Janeway Tells About 14 Months With N. African Contingent

By GERTRUDE BACHMAN
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WASHINGTON, D. C.—If your daughter, sister or wife is a WAC and stationed in the Mediterranean area, you are probably worrying a lot more about her than she is about herself. Maj. Margaret Janeway, Medical corps, U. S. army, gives a report that should put to route all unnecessary fears.

"They are never sick," Major Janeway told a press conference in Washington. "The Fifth army WACs have had an amazing health record from the beginning."

Of 1,800 women soldiers who landed in North Africa since January, 1943, only 12 have been sent home for medical reasons. Dr. Janeway believes that this record may prove one thing—that the more primitive the circumstances, the better a woman thrives.

"They take hardships in a spirit of fun," Major Janeway said.

When the first contingent went over in January, 1943, it found circumstances definitely primitive. The trip over wasn't exactly a sum-



PVT. MARION DeGRAY of Milwaukee, Wis., brings an armload of homemade bread into the messhall. Excellent food is credited to a large extent for the splendid health record of the WACs overseas.

mer cruise—especially since most of the women hadn't ever been to sea before. They landed at Oran on January 13, and took a train for Algiers. They discovered their quarters to be an old French convent with no heat and no water. They used their helmets for carrying water from an old well in the courtyard and for wash basins. It was bitterly cold. Major Janeway said:

"It was May before we thawed out, and it was May before we could get an occasional good night's sleep."

The women slept 12 in a room on straw mattresses placed on double-decker bunks, wore all their woolen clothes and wrapped themselves in three blankets when they went to bed. Those on the night shift were envious because they slept during the daytime when there were no air raids.

On Duty 12 Hours Daily.

Such were the conditions of their employment. The wages of WAC privates are the same as those of G. I. Joes—\$50 a month plus 10 per cent of the base pay for overseas duty. The hours were 12 a day, seven days a week. Since curfew was at 7 p. m., and the Algerian shops were closed at that time, there was no point in time off.

During this whole period, despite hardships—or what most of us would consider hardships—there were no serious illnesses and very little jitters, Major Janeway said. A three-bed dispensary had been set up in what was described as "a large closet" in the convent. This was used only as an isolation ward for those with colds—and as a room for an occasional rest of 24 hours for the very weary. Major Janeway said that after such treatment most of them were ready to go back to their jobs. Despite all the dire warnings, not one WAC contracted any of the diseases they had been told very carefully to guard against.

When more WACs arrived in Algiers in May, the entire WAC colony took over an apartment house which provided more comforts, and much more warmth. The number of beds in the dispensary was increased to 11.

Of the 68 women who came with this contingent, only three had to be



STROLLING DOWN the roadway to the entrance of the old French convent which is their barracks in North Africa are these five WACs who are assigned to the headquarters offices of Allied force headquarters. They are, left to right, Mary C. Woods, Everett, Mass.; Ellen Condon, Missoula, Mont.; Mary Livingston, Chattanooga, Tenn.; Lucille James, Sioux City, Iowa; and Elizabeth Page, Escanaba, Mich. A nun is passing in the background.

returned to the States. The reason given was "excessive nervousness." The three women were aged 30, 35 and 40 respectively, and had backgrounds of nervous instability. What had been a potential inability to adjust at home under secure routine now became complete maladjustment. Major Janeway said they just "couldn't take it."

No diet deficiencies were discovered. Army food was more than adequate, and in addition, the WACs were the friendly concern of army and navy men. They received oranges, eggs that cost \$2 a dozen, and a general supply of "nice spoiling." The navy men—who vied with the tradition of their marine brothers for having this situation well in hand—even obtained pillows for the WAC bunks.

"Every time a girl got a letter from home," Major Janeway said, "Mama wanted to know if she was getting her vitamins. She was, but she didn't know it. Fortunately, their folks started sending them vitamin pills and that settled the problem for us. They ate their pills and felt better."

Too Much Sun Tan.

The power of the North African sun was an unknown quantity to the WACs. Anxious to get a smooth tan, they discovered, to their dismay, that it could very easily be overdone. After a few painful burns,



LETTERS FROM home are the best morale boosters. Sgt. Betty Jane O'Leary of Pittsburgh, Pa., sounds the welcome "mail call."

which kept the victims away from work, sunburn was classified "not line of duty." That meant that any WAC who was not sensible enough to get her sun gradually, would have her pay docked for any time she was off work. They soon learned how to do it gradually.

By November, three more WAC companies had reported for duty in Algiers. In December, one company fresh from the States went directly to Italy.

The healthiest women in the whole Mediterranean area, Major Janeway found, were the Fifth army WACs living in tents very close behind the fighting lines in Italy. They were part of a communications platoon based at Naples and half up toward the front, living in tents, working the command post message center. They were with the Fifth army in North Africa and followed when American troops took Naples.

Major Janeway said that the WACs at the front and those in North Africa, for that matter, are so healthy because they do not have time to spend in "frivolous activities."

There is no special training for keeping the WACs in trim. In winter they don't have much opportunity for exercise, but in summer they swim. In North Africa, a program has been set up which pro-

vides each woman, after so long a time, a four-day rest period. A rest camp has been established 20 miles up the coast from Algiers. It was opened first for those earliest WACs who were beginning to look a little fatigued after their 12-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week grind with no passes from January to June.

No similar arrangement has been made in Italy as yet, but Major Janeway believes that one soon will be.

Only Six Marriages.

In 14 months, there have only been six marriages of WACs in the Mediterranean area. It is possible that a three-month waiting period—known as the "cooling-off" period—after announcing marriage intentions to the commanding officer is the reason. This is an army regulation and applies to both men and women.

In regard to the unhappy stories that have been circulating about the morals of the WACs, Dr. Janeway cited medical statistics which showed definitely these rumors to be figments of somebody's imagination.

The women were homesick at times, but "not too badly," Major Janeway said. Six weeks after the first group arrived in Algiers, however, there was no mail from home, which resulted in many a tearful night. But the regular arrival of mail after that, and the strict regimen took care of homesickness pretty thoroughly.

There have been no battle casualties among the WACs. One woman was injured, and one killed in a jeep accident. There was plenty of bombing, but the bombs fell "just across the street" from the Algiers barracks. The bombs would hit the same spot night after night. During the day the damage would be repaired, and that night it would be undone. Yet none of the WACs was hit.

A piece of shrapnel hit the bed in which a WAC was sleeping, but she was unharmed. There was some dispute between her and the occupant of the next bunk as to whom the piece of shrapnel belonged.

Major Janeway said that the jobs which the WACs perform, and about which "they are very keen" are those of stenographers, telephone operators, drivers, cooks, and all kinds of communications jobs.

Asked if the WACs overseas feel that girls at home are lackadaisical



A WAC in North Africa hangs up some personal laundry in the back yard of the convent which serves as a barracks, giving a homelike touch to the grim business of war.

about not joining up Major Janeway replied: "They certainly do!" She continued:

"It takes a level-headed and very well-balanced woman to stand up against that pressure and maintain her own good sense. It takes a level-headed woman to keep rested and to maintain her sense of humor."

ASK ME ? ANOTHER ?

A quiz with answers offering information on various subjects

The Questions

1. Approximately how much of the total land acreage of the United States is covered with forests?
2. What is a peccadillo?
3. When was FDR first inaugurated?
4. With what group of men is the name Ethan Allen associated?
5. What physical force throws people off revolving turntables at amusement parks?
6. What state, North or South Dakota, was admitted to the Union first?

7. What bird is mentioned most frequently in the Bible?

The Answers

1. One-third.
2. A petty fault.
3. March 4, 1933.
4. The Green Mountain boys.
5. Centrifugal force.
6. Both were admitted to the Union on the same day, November 2, 1889.
7. The dove is the most frequently mentioned bird in the Bible.

JUST WHAT HE WANTS!



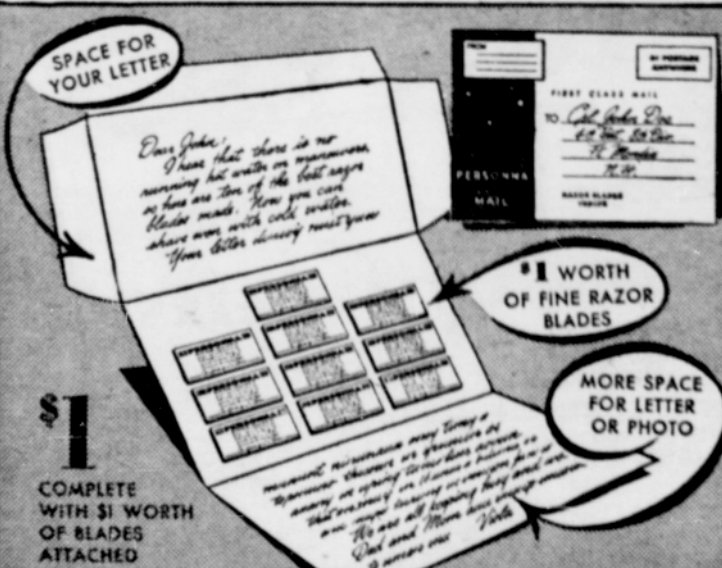
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